

**Response provided to journalist
01 March 2019**

Question:

Would anyone be available to provide a pre-recorded over the phone interview in regards to the fish consumption advice issued for Townsville?

Response:

Defence is unable to facilitate an interview this evening. Please find the following statement which can be attributed to Defence's First Assistant Secretary of Infrastructure Chris Birrer:

As part of the Lavarack Barracks Environmental Investigation into PFAS, the Department of Defence's specialist environmental consultant collected fish samples from the Ross River and lakes in the suburb of Idalia within the Investigation Area surrounding the Base. This sampling was undertaken to identify areas within the Investigation Area for additional sampling as part of the investigation.

As part of a routine data transfer arrangement, Defence shared the results of this fish sampling with relevant agencies within the Queensland Government. Based on the results, Queensland Health recommended that people should not consume fish caught from the lakes in the suburb of Idalia. This includes Northview Lake, Freshwater Lake, Fairview Lake and ponded sections of Gordon Creek.

Defence acknowledges that there are already signs in place around these lakes to advise against fishing. This advice should continue to be followed, and any fish that are caught from these lakes should not be consumed because the sampling results identified levels of types of PFAS - perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorohexane sulfonate (PFHxS) - above the Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) investigation trigger levels. These tests concluded that a child would exceed the tolerable daily intake for PFOS and PFHxS (combined) if two to three serves (of 75g) of fish were consumed per week from the lakes in Idalia, and an adult consuming three serves per week (of 150g).

Additionally, a review of sampling results from Ross River found the concentrations of PFOS and PFHxS were not at a level that would change the standard fish consumption guidelines issued by FSANZ which are protective of exposure to other substances, specifically mercury. The existing FSANZ advice is applicable across Australia and was most recently published in 2011. The advice states that consumption of most species of fish should be limited to two to three serves per week, where a serve is 75 grams for children up to six years and 150 grams for the rest of the population.

The types of fish that contained PFAS above the guidelines issued by FSANZ included:

- From the Ross River:
 - Milk fish
 - Barramundi
 - Blackspot longtom
- From the lakes in Idalia:

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- Milk fish
- Barramundi

Defence is in consultation with Townsville City Council about the placement of signs to be erected around the lakes in Idalia.

Defence expects to conduct a community event in the second quarter of 2019 to provide the findings of the Detailed Site Investigation Report. More information on the potential impact of consumption of locally caught seafood will be provided at that time, after validation and interpretation of the full dataset. Defence will continue to share incoming data with the Queensland Government and follow any recommendations issued by Queensland Health.